



Tip of the

Prevention Information from CSAP's Western Center for the Application of Prevention Technologies

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Prevention for Children of Persons with Addictions

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Youth respond uniquely to parental substance dependence. Some fail classes, while others achieve near-perfect grades. Some rebel, while others are overly compliant. However, all children of addicted persons are at high risk of abusing substances because they are more likely to experience many risk factors across the domains. The following risk factors may be among them:

Community Domain

- Transitions and mobility – Families with addicted caregivers tend to move more frequently than other families. In addition, their children are more likely to enter foster care.

Family Domain

- Family history of the problem behavior – If children are raised in a family with a history of addiction, the risk of their developing an addiction increases.
- Family management problems – Parenting by people with addictions is characterized by inconsistency and a lack of clear rules and limits.
- Family conflict – Communication within addicted family systems may be characterized by criticism, complaints, judgments, blame, guilt, and nagging. There is a greater likelihood

of sibling dissension and of emotional or physical violence within the family.

- Parental attitudes and involvement in drug use – Parents who ask their children to get them a beer or light a cigarette for them are more likely to have children that abuse substances.

School Domain

- Early and persistent antisocial behavior – Children from addicted family systems are more likely to demonstrate aggression, temper tantrums, and antisocial behavior.
- Lack of commitment to school – Children from addicted family systems are more likely to have unfavorable attitudes toward learning, classmates, teachers, and others in authority.

Individual Domain

- Constitutional factors – Children who are prenatally exposed to alcohol and other drugs may be diagnosed with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome or Fetal Drug Effect. These children may have learning disabilities and other challenges, which may increase the risk of academic failure and of substance abuse.

When working with children of addicted persons, first determine the two or three most prevalent risk factors present in their environments. Next, select prevention programs and strategies that will help to reduce those risk factors. For more information on assessing the risk factors and on selecting programs or strategies, visit: www.westcapt.org or call (888) 734-7476.

Resources:

National Association for Children of Alcoholics.
"Children of Addicted Parents: Important Facts."
www.nacoa.net/pdfs/addicted.pdf.

Fisher, G.L. & Harrison, T.C. (1997). *Substance Abuse: Information for School Counselors, Social Workers, Therapists, and Counselors* (2nd ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

The six regional CAPTs are funded by the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention in the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. For more information on this Tip of the CAPT or other Western CAPT services, please visit our web site: www.westcapt.org or our best practices website: www.open.org/westcapt.

Our toll-free office number is: (888) 734-7476